

Grace and peace to you from him who is, who was and who is to come. Amen.

¹⁶ Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. ¹⁷ When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. ¹⁸ Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” **This is the Gospel of our Lord.**

Dear Friends,

What is truth? That is a question that philosophers have been studying for centuries. Even Pontius Pilate asked Jesus this question but unfortunately, he didn't wait for an answer. But Jesus gives us the answer, **“His Word is truth.”** (John 17:17)

We can trust the words of scripture because they come from God the Holy Spirit who inspired the writers of the Bible what to write – matter of fact the Bible is the only absolute truth we have in this world.

This is important for us to understand as we celebrate our Triune God on this Trinity Sunday. The concept of a Triune God goes against human logic and the Bible does not use the name Triune God in either the Old Testament nor the New Testament. But don't worry, that concept is clearly present throughout scripture and we believe it by faith. So, as we consider our sermon text on this Trinity Sunday, we want to remember that God the Father created and preserves us, the God the Son Redeemed us and God the Holy Spirit brought us to faith and keeps us in that faith. Yet they are not three Gods but one God – Jehovah; the covenant God of grace and mercy. In this portion of scripture we see, **“Our Triune God in the Great Commission.”**

I. First we see our Triune God in Christ's authority. That authority was present at times throughout his ministry – especially when he cast demons out or healed people. His authority was present when he forgave sins. That authority was also present as he directed the disciples to meet him in Galilee. Jesus had appeared to his disciples a number of times before this day on that mountain in Galilee but I am sure they were wondering what he was going to share with them next.

People sometimes have a problem with verse 17, **“When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted.”** Are we talking about some of the eleven doubting or were there more followers of Christ on the mountain that day? We really don't know, but maybe a better question might be, **“What did they doubt?”**

Many theologians wonder if the disciples questioned whether this was Jesus or not? We often forget that after his resurrection, Jesus body was glorified. Probably not to the point which the disciples saw on the Mt. of Transfiguration, but certainly his body had changed somewhat and until he spoke or did something familiar to the disciples, they didn't always recognize him. Mary didn't recognize Jesus on Easter morning until he called her name and the disciples on the Road

to Emmaus didn't recognize Jesus until he broke bread and blessed it for the meal. So some may have wondered whether this was really Jesus.

“Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.” Jesus came to them and encouraged them with these words. Jesus as true God had all authority and power but now, as true man, **“God [his Father] exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name,¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”** (Philippians 2:9-11). Jesus wanted to make sure that his disciples and that we understand that there is nothing on earth or in heaven that is greater than the power of Jesus, God's Son.

The creation account supports this as Paul in his letter to the Colossians reminds us, **“For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him”** (Colossians 1:16). And the greatest display of Jesus' authority is recorded by John when Jesus said, **“The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life – only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again”** (John 10:17-18). Yet, we at times doubt the authority of Christ.

We can easily get caught up in seeing him as a great example for us to follow and before we know it we are starting to slide down the path of work righteousness thinking people will be in heaven because they are good folks who are kind and seem to do the right thing. Never forget that Jesus willingly lay down his life for our sins and only he could satisfy his Father's demand for our sins. He not only lay down his life to pay for our sins but took it up again as he rose from the dead to assure us that our salvation is complete.

Knowing he has the authority and power to bring us forgiveness and salvation also encourages us as he now commands us to share the good news of salvation.

II. “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” You, a disciple of Christ, are directed to go out and make disciples. But how do we make disciples? One tool our Savior has given us is baptism and as he commands us to go out and baptize, but he also reminds us that this sacrament is for all nations. That includes everyone. Not just the Jews, but the Gentiles too. Not just the believers but the unbelievers too. Baptism is all inclusive and for everyone.

What a wonderful gift God has given us in the sacrament of Holy Baptism and yet some churches deny the clear teachings of scripture when it comes to baptism. They call it a “christening” a naming of the child and ignore the blessing of faith that comes through the water connected to the Word. Other churches restrict it to believers and have changed God's gift into a good work that they do for God. Baptism is a wonderful way in which the one true God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – comes to make a disciple of Christ by the creating faith in the heart of the person being baptized.

That is why I will always encourage the parents to bring their child to be baptized as soon as possible – so that their precious blessing from God, can become a child of God and be welcomed into God’s family. What a gracious God we have in giving us this blessing.

But Jesus also commanded us to, **“Teach them to obey everything I have commanded you.”** Baptism is just the beginning. The rest takes a lifetime because Jesus wants us to know everything he has given us in his Word and to obey it – to make it part of who we are and how we live. Why? Because that is part of being a disciple – a follower of Christ. That is part of being a Christian – having our life centered on Christ. And we need to know God’s Word in order to obey it and to share it.

So often Christians say they just don’t have the gifts to follow this command of our Savior. God has equipped you and there are many ways in which you can follow this command. The simplest is to talk about your Savior, but don’t forget that you also give a witness through your actions as you live your life. People pay attention to what you do and don’t do – they pay attention to what your priorities in life are and sometimes that gives you an opportunity to extend an invitation to them to join you for worship.

You can also pray for our ministry and for those who share the Word. Some of you are able to support the ministry with your gifts and offerings and words of encouragement. So don’t ignore this portion of scripture and think it’s not for you, but rather look for ways in which you can follow this command of God as you live your life for him.

III. And don’t forget the Words of Jesus as he encourages you in this endeavor, **“Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”** While he ascended visibly he is still with us even today – coming to us through his Word and sacraments.

Do you ever doubt God’s promises? Do you ever wonder where God is when you really, really need him? Does the world sometimes make you forget the importance of God and faith in your life? The disciples who walked with Jesus and talked with Jesus and ate with Jesus still needed reassurance. Today we are reminded of God’s great love for us through his Son, our Savior. **“God has said, ‘Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.’ So we say with confidence, ‘The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?’”** (Hebrews 13:5- 6). Be confident always – the Lord is our helper and he won’t leave us or forsake us!

People have all kinds of ideas about truth and a lot of times they define truth to suit their own needs. But we know the only true source of truth is God’s Word where our God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit comes to us with authority, direction and assurance to go and do his work. You know God’s simple message of truth and eternal salvation. **“For salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved”** (Acts 4:12). As disciples of Christ, may we see his authority, may we listen to his commands and may we find comfort in his abiding presence in our lives. Amen.